

Incident Command System (ICS)



What is the ICS?

- A systematic tool used for command, control and coordination of an emergency response
- It allows agencies to work together using common terminology and operating procedures
- Consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications across multiple agencies at a single incident scene

History of the ICS

- Developed as a result of wild fires in Southern California in 1970
- Recognized a need for a system that would allow agencies to work together efficiently and effectively toward a common goal
- The ICS was created to address*:
 - **Nonstandard terminology among responding agencies.**
 - **Lack of capability to expand and contract as required by the situation.**
 - **Nonstandard and nonintegrated communications.**
 - **Lack of consolidated action plans.**
 - **Lack of designated facilities.**

* “What is the Incident Command System”

http://www.911dispatch.com/ics/ics_describe.html#concepts

When is the ICS Used?

- Not just for fire related emergencies
- It can also be used for*:
 - HAZMAT Incidents
 - Incidents with multiple casualties
 - Planned events
 - Single and multi-agency law enforcement incidents
 - Response to natural hazards
 - Air, rail, water or ground transportation incidents
 - Wide area search and rescue missions
 - Private sector emergency management program
 - Multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency incidents

* "What is the Incident Command System"

http://www.911dispatch.com/ics/ics_describe.html#concepts

ICS Components

- Common terminology
- Modular organization
- Integrated communications
- Unified command structure
- Consolidated action plan
- Manageable span-of-control
- Predesignated incident facilities
- Comprehensive resource management

Common Terminology

Must be established for:

- Organizational Functions
- Resource Elements
- Facilities

Modular Organization

- ICS organizational structure is based on the type and size of the incident
- 4 separate functional areas can be established if needed
- Management takes a top down approach

Integrated Communications

- Establishment of a common communications plan and incident based communications center
- All communications must be in plain English
- Communications are for essential messages only
- Organizational structure established for radio networks

Unified Command Structure

- Needed because incidents are usually multi-jurisdictional in nature and require the involvement of multiple agencies
- All agencies involved contribute to the process by*:
 - Determining overall objectives
 - Planning jointly for operational activities while conducting integrated operations
 - Maximizing the use of all assigned resources
- A single, coordinated Incident Action Plan is developed to manage the incident

* "What is the Incident Command System"

http://www.911dispatch.com/ics/ics_describe.html#concepts

Consolidated Action Plan

- Written when several agencies and jurisdictions are involved
- Objectives and strategies for the incident are determined by the Incident Commander
- Should cover all activities required for the incident

Manageable Span-of-Control

- Should range from 3 to 7, with 5 being the norm
- Influenced by the type of incident, the nature of the task and several other factors

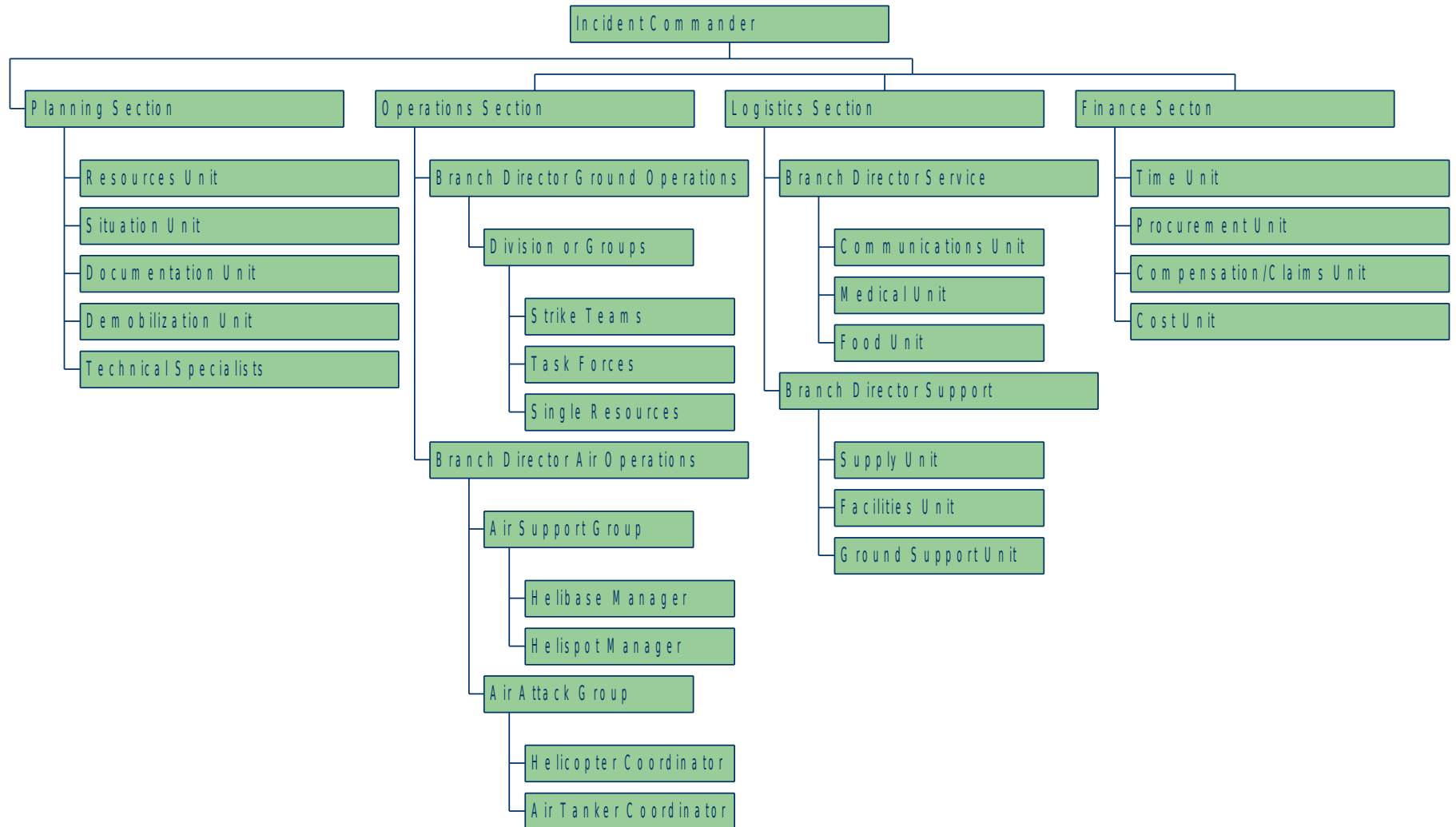
Predesignated Incident Facilities

- Facilities are determined by the requirements of the incident
- Several possible facilities exist:
 - Command Post
 - Incident Base
 - Staging Areas
 - Helibases
 - Helispots

Comprehensive Resource Management

- Resources can be managed in three different ways:
 - Single Resources
 - Task Forces
 - Strike Teams
- Resources are assigned a status condition
 - Assigned
 - Available
 - Out of Service

Incident Command System Organizational Chart



5 Functions of the ICS

- Command
- Planning
- Operations
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

Command

- Responsible for overall management of the incident
- Can be conducted as **Single Command** or **Unified Command**
- As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for certain activities
 - Information Officer
 - Safety Officer
 - Liaison Officer

Planning

- Overseen by the Planning Section Chief
- The Planning function is established by the Incident Commander during larger scale incidents
- Includes the collection, evaluation, dissemination and use of tactical information about the incident
- Responsible for the preparation and documentation of incident action plans

Operations

- Overseen by the Operations Section Chief
- Responsible for performing the response activities stated in the Incident Action Plan
- May be further organized into geographical divisions and functional groups

Logistics

- Overseen by the Logistics Section Chief
- Responsible for providing all support needs to the incident except air operations
- Divided into a Service Branch and a Support Branch
- Functions are geared toward support of the incident responders

Finance

- Overseen by Finance Section Chief
- Established on incidents when one or more of the agencies involved have a specific need for finance services
- Tracks incident costs and accounts for reimbursements
- Can be expanded into other units if the need requires
 - Time Unit
 - Procurement Unit
 - Compensation/Claims Unit
 - Cost Unit

Conclusion

- All emergency responders are encouraged to learn more about the ICS
- The ICS is an extremely comprehensive plan that requires training and study to completely understand the plan
- Many ICS references are available

For Further Information...

- “Incident Command System”, Fire Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University (out of print, but can be found used on www.bibliofind.com)
- International Fire Service Training Information - http://www.ifsta.org/store/default_intro.asp
- “What is the Incident Command System?”
http://www.011.dispatch.com/ics/ics_describe.html
- ICS Self Study Course
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/is195/pdf/IS195comp.pdf>